

May 2, 1997

Electricity Consumer Choice Rally

Testimony of F.Jane Toepfer

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Purpose of testimony - To voice the concerns and frustrations of the citizens in my community concerning the high cost of electricity.

Proof - Petitions were circulated through scales Mound all the way to Rockford to gather signatures of citizens who share in the frustration and suffer with the high cost of electricity under Commonwealth Edison. over 1500 signatures were brought forward.

Request - The State open up the electric utility market nation wide to competitive marketing to give consumers the choice of utility company that will best suit their needs and pocketbooks.

Reasons - The hardships invoked on the citizens, many of which are on fixed incomes, in their fight to maintain needed electric energy. Many people have been forced to give up their homes and move into apartments or low income housing. Young people are forced to commute or move to large cities for employment because factories and business' have been forced to leave the area.

I, F.Jane Toepfer, am addressing this committee of my own volition without any financial encouragement from any source. It is on my own behalf and that of my fellow citizens who are as frustrated as I.

TESTIMONY of F. JANE TOEPFER

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ELECTRICITY CONSUMER CHOICE RALLY

Concerns of citizens and myself concerning utility costs.

I, F. Jane Toepfer, resident of Apple River, Jo Daviess Co, Il. do hereby testify to the concerns of my fellow citizens in this area in which I live, regarding the high cost of electricity.

We see no other viable alternative to the problem which engulfs us other than the pro-competition propose.1 outlined in "House Bill 1997" which will alleviate the pressure on the backs of citizens who have no other choice than to submit to the high cost of electric power which plays such a vital role in our everyday lives, both at home and at work.

Through the cooperation of Interstate Commerce, the field of competition can be greatly expanded offering advantages to both consumers and utility companies alike. Our great country was founded to protect the oppressed! Through free enterprise and competition, challenges have encouraged people in all walks of life strive for better futures in their own personal worlds which have increased the quality of life for all,. By bridging the walls we have set up for ourselves in "State Lines", we can connect with our neighbors across the country and share ion fair prices which can help the growth of industry and improve the quality of life for those restricted at this time.

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Past and present high electric bills have caused many problems for citizens locked into the ComEd service area. Due to the excessive cost of electricity in this area, many people have lost their jobs simply because the business or factories they worked for were forced to close their doors or relocate to another area where the cost of electricity was more reasonable. Local people are forced to drive great distances daily for employment. Some people fortunately work in factories in places like Freeport, Rockford, Chicago, Dubuque, Ia, or Mt.Horeb, Wi. where they receive good pay and benefits. However, many residents commute at least sixty miles daily for lower paying jobs with few if any benefits. Commonwealth has a strangle hold on the economy in Jo Daviess County.

Recently Kelly Springfield in Freeport took a stand against ComEd and the outcome resulted in Kelly breaking free and building their own power source. Other companies can't afford to do that.

This area is attractive to corporations and light industry because of the area and the type of people who live here, and yet there is a cloud over their heads called ComEd. When they factor in the part of the equation of operating expense called electricity they have a tendency to look elsewhere.

The Eaton Corporation still owns a building in Warren where they operated a factory for several years, but they were forced to consolidate their operation and move all their work into their other plant which is located outside the ComEd area. Janlin Plastics also had a factory in Warren but were forced to move their operation out of state leaving the majority of their employees without jobs.

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small business' like family restaurants are squashed under the feet of ComEd much too often. JoDaviess Counties urban area is made up of small towns. These towns, such as Warren and Scales Mound have difficulty in maintaining restaurants because of the high cost of electricity under ComEd. Within the last year alone these two towns have lost three such business', while across the state line in Wisconsin, only ten to fifteen miles from either town, a similar business has been in operation for over thirty years.

On the home front citizens are struggling to exist in this beautiful corner of the state. Winters are especially hard on them. Many homes, apartments, and nursing homes are heated with electricity. Even those that don't have electric heat need that electricity to operate their furnaces and circulate the air. In an area like ours where there is an increasing number of adults on fixed incomes, the burden becomes overbearing. An increasing number of senior citizens have been forced to give up their family homes and move into apartments or low income housing. Many young people just starting out on their own are finding their utility bills to be almost as expensive as their rent. Where does it stop? In situations where people are living in rural areas without the convenience of city water, if people lose their electric service in April, they find themselves without water and plumbing as well as heat and appliances.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of organizations like CUB and Citizens for a Sound Economy, citizens are kept up to date on the activities at ComEd, that otherwise would go unnoticed by consumers. One particular issue involves the sale ComEd made of two of their coal generated power plants which netted them \$200 million profit. If I understand

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correctly, it sounds like ComEd has an agreement with the new owners to pay them an escalating fee over the next fifteen years whether they purchase energy from them or not. This cost would be passed on to the consumers but the consumers would not be seeing any benefit from the original sale of the plants which the consumers have paid to build. What is wrong with this picture?

People are fed up with being taken advantage of. They are sick of being treated like fools. There is a time when enough is enough, and that time is now!

Jane Downs and I wrote letters to all the State Representatives and Senators concerning the right to free choice on electricity. we wrote petitions and circulated them throughout the area from Rockford through Scales Mound. Copies of the petitions with signatures were sent to Ron Lawfer and Todd Sieben.

Jane Downs also wrote a letter to Governor Edgar. We submitted letters to the editors of the local newspapers to help bring awareness to the community on the issues. But Jane and I are not alone in our concerns. We are not here strictly on our own behalf, but on the behalf of all the concerned, frustrated citizens, who are tired of being oppressed by ComEd.

Originally electricity was a luxury - in today's world it is a necessity! Our lives revolve around electric current. Heating, cooling, illumination, preservation, preparation, documentation, information, recreation, survival! without it our lives would be in turmoil. Our ancestors managed without it, but we have become so dependent on it that only a very few would be able to live without it. Because of that

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dependency, we need protection through conscientious administrators following restricted guidelines. That is where the people put their faith in you. You have the power! But don't forget who gave it to you. The People! The people you are here to protect.

Ans the Lord answered them saying, "In as much as you have done it unto the least of these thy bretheren, You have done it unto Me! "

Thank you for your time and your attention.